

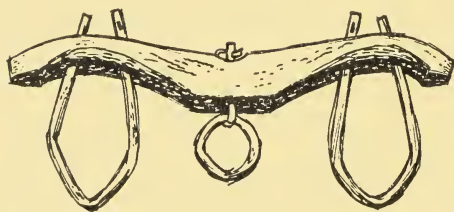
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Turner, Justin G.

The Carvalho Portrait of Lincoln

LINCOLN ROOM



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THE
CARVALHO
PORTRAIT OF
LINCOLN

A Lincoln
SESQUICENTENNIAL
Commemoration



A NOTE ON
SOLOMON NUÑES CARVALHO
AND HIS PORTRAIT OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY JUSTIN G. TURNER

LOS ANGELES
THE PLANTIN PRESS



1960

The Carvalho portrait of Lincoln
was presented to Brandeis University by
Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Turner
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Mack
Mr. and Mrs. Justin G. Turner

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Levinson Room

FOREWORD

A UNIVERSITY which prides itself upon the close relationship between its faculty and students finds difficulty in accepting traditional classroom architecture. The blackboard, the rows of stiff chairs, the barren walls, all combine to make the learning process at times rather tedious and uninspiring.

Brandeis University has developed an idea which may be the answer to this problem: classrooms literally saturated with memorabilia associated with the subject under study. The new Schiffman Humanities Center and the Olin-Sang American Civilization Center, both currently under construction, will be patterned after this plan. Lounges will be given names such as "The

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Walt Whitman Room," "The Shakespeare Room," and "The Spinoza Room." Among the halls will be found "The Four Freedoms Hall," "The Washington Hall," and "The Lincoln Hall."

The Carvalho portrait of Lincoln reproduced here illustrates the quality of the décor to be applied to the finished areas. The Carvalho Lincoln, treasured gift of Messrs. and Mesdames Maurice Turner, John J. Mack, and Justin G. Turner of Los Angeles, will grace one of the walls of the Lincoln Room and will be a central attraction for student and visitor alike. The Lincoln Room, with this magnificent painting as the focus, will become a center for teaching the Lincoln period in American history. The subject matter of the lectures and studies can no longer be viewed as fossilized material; it will live and breathe and become a vibrant part of the student's approach to his studies.

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This novel approach is bound to have a salutary effect upon the University as a whole. It is in a sense the introduction of the laboratory approach to the social sciences and the humanities, and it will be followed with deep interest by educators everywhere.

Abraham L. Sachar, *President*

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

Waltham, Massachusetts

12 February 1960



THE CARVALHO PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN

MY INTEREST in Solomon Nuñez Carvalho stems from two sources. First, he was the only Jewish personage of prominence who visited the West Coast in the early 1850s. Second, his portrait of Abraham Lincoln dated 1865, is the only known portrait of Lincoln by a contemporary Jewish artist.

The portrait, large and handsome, suggests a brooding calm, the atmosphere not worldly but idealistic and mysterious, in which the artist has included a number of interesting iconographical details. The Capitol building appears in the background as a symbol of union. Diogenes having

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at last found an honest man, stands in a posture of amazement, his lantern having fallen to the ground. Lincoln is holding a scroll on which is visible the words, "with malice toward none, with charity for all," from the concluding paragraph of the Second Inaugural address. On the left is a statue of an unidentified personage wearing a toga. As far as I have been able to ascertain, this is only one of four recorded portraits of Lincoln which have allegorical attributes.

Another allegorical painting by D. G. Blythe dated 1862 is in the M. & M. Karolik Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. This portrays Lincoln striking at a dragon, which is in the act of tearing down with its tail a building symbolizing the Union. The dragon, a beast, appears to be part hog, perhaps because Blythe felt that selfish greed was an important factor in the Rebellion. Lincoln is being restrained by a Copperhead who

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is tightening a chain around his right leg, together with the Liberty Bell, to a post labeled "Constitutional Democracy." In the background is Tammany Hall itself, in the shadowy interior of which appears the outline of a donkey's head showing it to be a democratic stronghold. The burning city and empty gallows in the distance are intended to emphasize the violence of the conflict and the necessity for decisive action.

Another painting, by George Frederick Wright, dated 1864, shows President Lincoln alone in a great storm holding together thirteen strands of a ship's hauser, symbolic of the original states and the Ship of State. This painting was sold by the Estate of Percy A. Rockefeller in 1937. Its present whereabouts are unknown.

A steel engraving by Henry Bryan Hall of New York bears the following legend: "Diogenes, his lantern needs no more—an honest man is found!"

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The search is o'er." At the bottom right is a bust portrait of Lincoln in an oval frame. At the left, Diogenes in repose, draped in a toga, sits with his lantern in his left hand, resting upon the frame. The Capitol building is in the background at the top left. The frame rests against the plinth of the base of a column upon which Diogenes is seated. The original steel engraving is in the collection of the Lincoln Museum, Washington, D. C. The whereabouts of the original portrait from which the engraving was made is unknown.

SOLOMON NUÑES CARVALHO was born in Charleston, South Carolina, April 27, 1815, and died in New York City on May 21, 1897. At the age of twenty he sailed for the West Indies as a supercargo on a trading vessel which was wrecked during a storm. He swam to shore and with the aid of a rope he successfully guided other passen-

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gers and members of the crew to safety. This episode is said to have taken place in an isolated area where Carvalho passed the time before returning home, drawing charcoal portraits and sketches of his fellow passengers and the local inhabitants.

One of Carvalho's earliest paintings was that of the interior of the *Beth Elohim* Synagogue at Charleston, which was destroyed by fire in 1838. It was painted from memory and offered to the congregation "for such compensation as the Board may deem proper to allow." The sum of fifty dollars was sent to Carvalho by the Congregation.

Carvalho was listed at various periods in the City directories of Philadelphia, Baltimore and Charleston as a professional daguerreotypist and portraitist. A newspaper account in the *Charleston Courier* of February 3, 1851, informed the public of "his familiarity as a professional artist with the philosophical principles of light and shadow, en-

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abling him to combine the study and practice of both to great advantage. An exquisite delicate and lifelike sketch in oil, which he has just completed, is attracting the admiration of his visitors, and considered by many good judges among them, to be a highly successful effort in the delineation of a difficult subject, attitude and expression. Mr. Carvalho's rooms are open at all hours of the morning and afternoon for the inspection of ladies and gentlemen desirous of seeing his specimens and improvements in the art." In 1852 he won a silver medal offered by the South Carolina Institute with his painting, "The Intercession of Moses for Israel."

Just when Carvalho moved to Baltimore is unknown but according to his granddaughter, Clare Carvalho, he was living there when the Frémont incident took place with which he opens his *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West*. First published in 1857, this volume is the only extended

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narrative of mid-nineteenth century far Western American adventure written by a Jew.

Carvalho begins his narrative as follows:

On the 22nd August, 1853, after a short interview with Col. J. C. Frémont, I accepted his invitation to accompany him as artist of an Exploring Expedition across the Rocky Mountains. A half hour previously, if anybody had suggested to me the probability of my undertaking an overland journey to California, even over the emigrant route, I should have replied there were no inducements sufficiently powerful to have tempted me. Yet, in this instance, I impulsively, without even a consultation with my family, passed my word to join an exploring party, under command of Col. Frémont, over a hitherto untrodden country, in an elevated region, with the full expectation of being exposed to all the inclemencies of an arctic winter. I know of no other man to whom I would have trusted my life, under similar circumstances.

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This volume is the only available source of detailed historical data regarding Colonel John Charles Frémont's fifth and final expedition into the Far West, of which Carvalho was the first official photographer to be appointed to the staff of an exploring party anywhere in the world. This expedition was directly related to the search for a most desirable route for a railroad line to the Pacific. Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, having exhibited his preference for the southernmost route to California as the path for a projected railway, and having sent out other expeditions to demonstrate the practicability of his plan, Frémont, privately financed by his father-in-law, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri and his own funds, determined to prove that a central route was also practicable and more desirable. Frémont had described his previous explorations but having been nominated in 1856 as the first Republican

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candidate for president, he undoubtedly was too occupied with his campaign to describe his last expedition. Carvalho's volume has been often quoted by researchers and historians. His stature as an artist and author has increased steadily through the years. As far as we know, Carvalho is recorded as being the second Jew to cross the Rocky Mountains into California, being preceded by Emanuel Lazarus, who accompanied the Jedediah S. Smith party of seventeen persons who entered California in November, 1826.

The last chapter of Carvalho's volume deals with his experiences in Southern California. While in Los Angeles, he painted portraits of Ex-Governor Pío Pico and several other pioneers. Unfortunately, we have been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of these western portraits. Carvalho was instrumental in organizing the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Los Angeles in 1854. This was

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the first Jewish institution organized in Los Angeles and was the forerunner of the present Jewish Community Council in Los Angeles. The concluding paragraph of Carvalho's volume reads:

To the brothers Samuel and Joseph Labatt, merchants of Los Angeles: I am indebted for many acts of kindness; men who anticipate the necessities of their fellowman, and spontaneously offer money advances to a perfect stranger, I have not often met with, but when found, I make a note of it.

The Labatts were among the organizers of this Society, and Samuel K. Labatt served as its first president. At the first meeting of the society on July 2, 1854, the following motion was presented and passed:

Resolved, unanimously, that the thanks of this meeting be tendered to Mr. S. N. Carvalho for his valuable services in organizing this Society and that he be elected an

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honorary member; also that these proceedings be published in the Occident.

Although the *Incidents* were reprinted several times the volumes are not easily obtainable. One hundred years after the events described, the Jewish Publication Society re-published this volume in 1954 in connection with the Tercentenary Anniversary of Jewish settlement in North America. For a detailed sketch of Carvalho and his *Incidents*, one must read Dr. Bertram W. Korn's splendid introduction to the 1954 edition for which he assembled an inventory of all of Carvalho's known paintings, most of which are reproduced.



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